Castlemaine Naturalist

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Monthly newsletter of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Breutelia affinis moss, Clinkers Hill – Noel Young

SEANA Spring Camp – Mandurang, Aug 18,19, 2012

Geraldine Harris

Each autumn and spring field naturalists from south east Australia explore the natural environment together at South-east Naturalists' Association (SEANA) Campouts. This year the Spring Camp was hosted by the Bendigo Field Naturalists Group and as usual there was a vast choice of activities to choose from over the weekend.

Activities included **full day excursions** to the Greater Bendigo National Park (Whipstick and Kamarooka), Mt Alexander and Harcourt, the Northern Plains Wetlands and Lake Eppalock and Heathcote, Forests South East of Bendigo, and Wellsford Forest and **half day excursions** to Spring Gully, Bendigo Sewerage Treatment Plant, Southern Whipstick Forest, Bats & Boxes at Rosalind Park, No 7 Park at Kangaroo Flat, Gold Mining in Central Bendigo, Kennington Reservoir, One Tree Hill, and The Springs at Sedgewick. And Friday evening Rob Moors and Peter Ellis talked about the history of the area and on Saturday evening Marilyn Hewish and Steve Williams talked about Moths.

On Saturday Geoff and I went on the full day excursion to the **Whipstick and Kamarooka with Matt Comer** as our guide. We were treated with a very interesting tour of well-chosen locations where we were shown some of the more unusual flora that occurs in the area.

Some of these included:

Smooth Grevillea	*Grevillea rosmarinifolia var glabella* (different colours)
Narrow-leaf Waxflower	*Philotheca angustifolia*
Whirrakee Wattle	*Acacia wiliamsonii* - usually at its peak on August 31
Mallee wattle	*Acacia montana*
Blue Mallee	*Eucalyptus polybractea*
Kamarooka Mallee	*Eucalyptus frogartii*
Green Mallee	*Eucalyptus viridis*
Bull Mallee	*Eucalyptus behriana*

Scarlet Mint -bush	*Prostanthera aspalathoides*
Large Striped Greenhood	*Pterostylis robusta*
Common Sourbush	*Choretrum glomeratum var glomeratum* (has leaf scales)
Spiny Bitter-pea	*Daviesia benthamii subsp humilis*
Grey Box	*Eucalyptus microcarpa* – highly significant that so much remains here
Wedge-leaf Hop-bush	*Dodonaea viscosa subsp cuniata*
Waterbush	*Myoporum montanum*
Berrigan	*Eremophila longifolia*, a few isolated remnants

During the morning we saw Mallee Mouse Spider in the leaf litter. These red and black spiders have four lungs visible on underside, and have downward facing fangs which cause them to rear up in attack pose.

While having lunch at the Kamarooka Sports Oval, Matt and Peter Ellis showed us a copy of early club member Frank Robins' map of the Whipstick Kamarooka area recording the locations of many local plants and other items of interest in the area. Frank was resigned that the Whipstick would all eventually be lost and he was intent on making a scientific record of the area prior to its disappearance. Ironically, some things Frank recorded many years ago are still present but as he predicted much has been lost. Valuable records such as these make such comparisons over time possible.

Frank would do quarterly surveys using aerial maps and parish plans to locate roads and gullies. He would trace everything onto tracing paper using the mileage metre on his car and he would extrapolate his measurements to 1/100 of a mile. Peter remembered one day when he drove round and round a particular tree in order to bring up a round number on his odometer. Frank used letters for the dominant cover plants such as g = Green Mallee and numbers for more unusual plants. He also recorded the locations of eucalyptus factory sites, puddling machines, mallee fowl mounds and charcoal burners on his maps. His final copies were recorded with a mapping pen and indian ink.

After lunch we added more local plants to our list...
Narrow-leaf Desert Cassia *Senna form taxon 'zygophylla'*

Common Eutaxia	*Eutaxia microphylla*
Inland Pigface	*Carpobrotus modestus*
Sugarwood	*Myoporum platycarpum* (fine teeth on leaf edge)
New Holland Daisy	*Vittadinia sp*
Small-leaved Clematis	*Clematis microphylla s s*
Grey Mulga	*Acacia brachybotrya*
Weeping Pittosporum	*Pittosporum angustifolium*
Inland Pommaderris	*Pomaderris paniculosa subsp. paniculosa* (fairly localised)
Sweet Quandong	*Santalum acuminatum* (often growing close to trees as seed dropped by possums)
Blue Burr-daisy	*Calotis cuneifolia*
Moonah	*Melaleuca lanceolata*
Slaty Sheoak	*Allocasuarina meulleriana*
Broombush	*Melaleuca uncinata*
Rosy Baeckea	*Euryomyrtus ramosissima subsp. ramosissima*
Common Correa	*Correa reflexa*
Sticky Cassinia	*Cassinia complinata formerly uncata)*
Shrubby Dampiera	*Dampiera dysantha*
Downy Grevillea	*Grevillea alpina*
Ploughshare Wattle	*Acacia gunnii*
Twiggy Daisy-bush	*Olearia ramulose*
Sticky Boronia	*Boronia anemonifolia subsp. anemonifolia*
Gorse Bitter-pea	*Daviesia ulicifolia*
Shrub Violet	*Hybanthus floribunda*
Twiggy Daisy-bush	*Olearia ramulosa*

On Saturday evening **Marilyn Hewish and Steve Williams talked about their work researching for the book series "Moths of Victoria" with Peter Marriott**. Marilyn showed examples of moths that look like butterflies and butterflies that exhibit the characteristics of moths and eventually concluded that butterflies are most accurately described as highly evolved moths.

Marilyn showed many slides of beautifully coloured and diverse moths and Steve talked about his studies of their life cycles. Over the past four years Marilyn and her husband Dean have recorded over 1000 species in Victoria and she claims that "beats birdwatching" any day. Such is her passion for moths, all their holidays have become nocturnal and somewhat dangerous as they "loiter" about favourite public toilet lights at night recording more and more new moth species!

Climate change is a real threat. Moths are an important source of food for many animals (a bat might be described as 80% recycled moth), and moth lava, in turn, feed on all sorts of sources (bracken, algae, fungi etc.) that might be affected by climate change and loss of biodiversity.

After the talk we were able to go outside to three floodlit sheets on the edge of the bush to look at what moths had been attracted to the light.

On Sunday we braved more cold weather and went on the **all day excursion to Wellsford Forest and the Axedale sandbelt with Rod Orr.**

Once again we toured to various spots looking at eucalypt diversity, salinity along Axe Creek and the huge wash away that occurred when one metre of water flowed over the emergency spill way at Eppalock. We compared burnt areas with unburnt areas and identified plants and bird species as we went.

Some of the plants we identified were:

Mealy Bundi	*Eucalyptus nortonii*
Rough Wattle	*Acacia aspera*
Blue Caladenia *(photo)*	*Cyanicula caerulea*
Slender Dodder Laurel	*Cassytha glabella*
Red Ironbark	*Eucalyptus tricarpa* (3 buds)
Ausfields Acacia	*Acacia ausfieldii*
Cypress Daisybush	*Olearia teretifolia*
Totem Poles	*Melaleuca decussata (bird habitat)*
Gold Dust Wattle	*Acacia acinacea* - (once divided into *A obliqua* and *A rotundifolia*, we were able to see the round-leaf form that grows in the northern area)

Because these camps are organised and led by locals who know their own areas they provide excellent opportunities to learn from local experts. The 2013 SEANA Autumn Campout is being hosted by the Peninsula FNC and the 2013 Spring Campout will be in the Murray River Area and hosted by the Broken Creek FNC. Hope you can come along.

Wednesday Wildflower Walk (Wander?) #1

Rita Mills

Kalimna Park, 19 September.

After winter trying to dominate the scene for just a bit longer, it was a delight to find so much in flower so close to the town. Again we found lots of very confused Sweet Bursaria *Bursaria spinosa* in full flower. Is this a result of years of drought? There was masses of Fairy Waxflower *Philotheca verrucosa*, not many orchids, though we found quite a few Leopard Orchids *Diuris pardina*, and a very sturdy specimen of a Beard-orchid in bud. Though one of the group told us that Dwarf Greenhoods *Pterostylis nana* were doing very well at Maldon where he lives, we only found a few leaves this year in this area.

Which is the way of the bush: some years one group of plants do very well, other years it is a different set; some continue to flourish, some die away in one spot and appear in another later on. Nevertheless, wandering around the bush at this time of year, and on a pleasant, mild afternoon, is always relaxing and pleasurable.

The list of plants in flower is -
Leopard Orchid *Diuris pardina*, Pink Fingers *Caladenia carnea*, Fairy Wax-flower *Philotheca verrucosa*, Pink bell *Tetratheca ciliata*, Gold-dust Wattle *Acacia acinacea*, Rough Wattle *A. aspera,* Spreading Wattle *A. genistifolia*, Golden Wattle *A. pycnantha*, Hedge Wattle *A. paradoxa*, Gorse Bitter-pea *Daviesia ulicifolia*, Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea *D. leptophylla*, Slender Rice-flower *Pimelea linifolia*, Tall Sundew *Drosera peltata ssp. auriculata*, Rough Mintbush *Prostanthera denticulata*, Sticky Everlasting *Xerochrysum viscosum* (there were some new ones close to flowering, not just the ones that had hung on from an early flowering about April or May), Sweet Bursaria *Bursaria spinosa*, Downy Grevillea *Grevillea alpina* (graded in colour from red, though apricot to a pale yellow), Early Nancy *Wurmbea dioica*, Yam Daisy *Microseris sp.3*, Native Primrose (or Native Pansy) *Goodenia blackiana*, Billy Buttons *Craspedia variabilis*, Bluebell, probably Tall *Wahlenbergia stricta*, Wood-rush *Luzula sp.*, and Beard-orchid, probably Purplish, in bud *Calochilus robertsonii*.

Daviesia ulicifolia

photos by Noel Young

Bursaria spinosa

GLEN COE and (inset) Ragged Robin - *Lychnis flos-ciculi*

Scottish Wildflowers

Joy Weatherill

Walking in Glen Coe, Scotland in June this year, was an exhilarating experience, with spectacular views; and even though it was summer, there was still snow on some of the higher peaks. The calm lochs had mirror-like reflections - possibly because the water had been darkened in colour with the runoff from the boggy moors.

It was interesting seeing the array of wildflowers - some similar to ours, like the Sundew, and others quite different.

As well as being beautiful to look at, there were plants which served a useful purpose - Heath Bedstraw - *Galium saxatile* - has been used in the past as filling for mattresses; and Bog Myrtle along with lavender and rosemary, is made into a natural spray to keep away the midgies. There was a beautiful wildflower meadow on the hills behind the old fishing village of Port Ramsay on the Isle of Lismore, with a variety of lovely flowers including many orchids. Higher up on the ridges in Glen Coe and across the valley from Ben Nevis - Heath, Lousewart, Wild Thyme and Thistle.

Not everyone was interested in taking photos; so a stop usually meant running to catch up. If Cassia had given her excellent talk on mosses prior to my going to Scotland, I would have been crawling around in the bog on Rannoch Moor too.

Above, left to right:

Cross-leafed Heath - *Erica tetralix*, Spotted Orchid, Marsh Orchid – *Dactylorhiza*

Below:

Lousewart - *Pedicularis sylvatica,*

Bird'sfoot Trefoil - *Lotus corniculatus*,

Cuckooflower - *Cardamine pratensis*

Marsh Marrigold - *Calitha palustris*

Wednesday Wildflower Wander #2

Rita Mills

The Monk, 26 September.

Again there were about a dozen people went out to the Monk in very pleasant weather, though it was still very dry at that stage. We looked for, and found several Castlemaine Spider Orchids *Caladenia clavescens*, and couldn't help finding lots of Billy Buttons *Craspedia variabilis*, which are a feature of the Monk at this time of year. Altogether, between us we had a very respectable list of plants in flower.

Pink Fingers	*Caladenia carnea*
Castlemaine Spider Orchid	*Caladenia clavescens*
Leopard Orchid	*Diuris pardina*
Wax-lip Orchid	*Glossodia major*
Early Nancy	*Wurmbea dioica*
Gold dust Wattle	*Acacia acinacea*
Golden Wattle	*A pycnantha*
Honey-pots	*Acrotriche serrulata*
Billy buttons	*Craspedia variabilis*
Gorse Bitter-pea	*Daviesia ulicifolia*
Tall Sundew	*Drosera peltata*
Primrose Goodenia	*Goodenia blackiana*
Downy Grevillea	*Grevillea alpina*
Purple Coral-pea	*Hardenbergia violacea*
Urn Heath	*Melichrus urceolatus*
Fairy Wax-flower	*Philotheca verrucosa*
Slender Rice-flower	*Pimelea linifolia*
Hill Flat-pea	*Platylobium montanum ssp montanum*
White Marianth	*Rhytidosporum procumbens*
Candles	*Stackhousia monogyna*
Pink Bells	*Tetratheca ciliata*
Early Nancy	*Wurmbea dioica*
Sticky Everlasting	*Xerochrysum viscosum*

Diuris pardina

photos by Noel Young

Caladenia clavescens

Return to Conglomerate Gully 27/9/12

Noel Young

Riddells Creek on a warm day. Flowering plants were plentiful though with the exception of Wattles and Early Nancy dense patches were lacking as yet.

Waxlip orchid	*Glossodia major*
Leopard Orchid	*Diuris pardina*
Tall Greenhood	*Pterostylis melagramma*
Prickly Moses	*Acacia verticillata*
Hedge Wattle	*Acacia paradoxa*
Tall Sundew	*Drosera peltata*
Early Nancy	*Wurmbea dioica*
Creamy Candles	*Stackhousia monogyna*
Blue Pincushion (buds)	*Brunonia australis*
Common Beard Heath	*Leucopogon virgatus*
Common Hovea	*Hovea heterophylla*
Narrow leaf Bitter-pea	*Daviesia leptophylla*
Showy Parrot pea?	*Dillwynia sericea*
Trigger plant	*Stylidium armeria*
Purple Coral-pea	*Hardenbergia violacea*
Button Everlasting	*Helichrysum scorpioides*
Common Everlasting	*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*
White Marianth	*Rhytidosporum procumbens*
Common Heath	*Epacris impressa*
Yam Daisy	*Microseris* sp.
Love Creeper	*Comesperma volubile*
Running Postman	*Kennedia prostrata*
Bitter Cryptandra	*Cryptandra amara*
Austral Bear's-ears	*Cymbonotus preissianus*
Native Violet	*Viola hederacea*
Tall Bluebell	*Wahlenbergia stricta*
Mat-rush sp	*Lomandra longifolia* ?sp
Black anther Flax-lily	*Dianella admixta* (buds)
Green Rush (?)	*Juncus gregiflorus*
Common Woodrush	*Luzula meridionalis*

Right above - Common Heath *Epacris impressa*
Right – Love Creeper *Comesperma volubile*
Below left - Austral Bear's-ears *Cymbonotus preissianus*
Below right - Bitter Cryptandra *Cryptandra amara*

Cassia Read introduces us to biocrusts

Noel Young

The word 'cryptogam' (meaning non flowering plants) is used to cover the gamut of biological soil crusts. Comprised in the main of algae, fungi, lichens liverworts and mosses, some in symbiotic relations, these plant types have not altered substantially since the late Silurian some 400 million years ago, when they were the first plant life to leave the oceans and colonise the land. Then as now, they altered the land by binding the surface soil, forming crusts which rendered the soil more erosion resistant. They still form an important part of the ecology of more arid lands.

Severe damage was done to soil crusts when European settlers introduced grazing animals into the dry country of Australia. The ensuing dust-bowls along with drought cycle winds have removed huge amounts of top soil, some of which ends up colouring New Zealand glaciers. It is no coincidence that the first Government Department dedicated to any branch of the environment was the Soil Conservation Authority.

After an excellent presentation to the club at the last meeting Cassia Read led the excursion the next morning to examine some real live mosses in the Clinkers Hill reserve. As the weather had been damp and cool the previous day, we were able to see mosses at their best. Those that weren't could be encouraged with a spray of water. Mosses lack the vascular system which transports moisture within more advanced plants, so must absorb water directly through leaf surfaces. Though they thrive in moist conditions, they have evolved to survive long periods of dormancy when dehydrated.

To really get to grips with these macroscopic plants, it is necessary to adopt an appropriate attitude (yoga helps) and use a strong magnifying glass. Skateboarder's knee-pads are recommended by Cassia. I think I will be tempted to resort to table-top photography if I get more serious. On the other hand, it is only a step more difficult than photographing some of our cryptic wildflowers. Examples of my attempts at Clinkers Hill follow.

Observations

- **Fruit Bats** heard in Saint st. 2 weeks ago – Chris Timewell
- Geraldine Harris reported Golden Moth Orchids at Barkers Creek, and Ed and Natasha's observation of a **Platypus** in the river near their home.
- North Chewton – Garfield Wheel area has lots of wattle, Hardenbergia and Early Nancy flowering - Rita
- Early August: saw a Grey Falcon in Darebin Creek up near Epping; early September, a Goshawk in my backyard; Running Postman at the Dog Rocks, and lots of Hardenbergia violacea along the train line – Richard Piesse
- 25/9 walking from Forest Ck to Manchester reef heard calls of Fantail Cuckoo, Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoo, and Pallid Cuckoo – Noel Young
- In late September Richard reported finding Mountain Greenhoods in the Sherbrooke Forest, hundreds of Straw-necked Ibis on a lake at Rupertswood, and lots of Hardenbergia through the local bush
- Chris Timewell counted 35 bird species and found nesting Sittellas on a visit to the Rise and Shine reserve
- Rita has heard Fuscous Honeyeaters at home on the north side of Castlemaine 'for the first time in years'

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme
October 2012

Wed October 10: Wednesday Wildflower Walk 4 pm

Fri October 12 meeting: speaker BOB COOK; bird photography.

Sat October 13 field trip: Pudding Bag Lane

Wed October 17: Last Wednesday Wildflower Walk 4 pm.

Leader: Richard Piesse

Fri November 9: meeting: speaker JEFF YUGOVIC; Scientific review of the work of artist Eugene Von Guerard

Sat November 10: field trip: Blackwood ?

VISITORS ARE **WELCOME** AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 7.30 pm.
Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.
Business meetings - fourth Thursday of each month, except December, at George Broadways; 24a Greenhill Ave., at 7.30 pm. Members are invited to attend.

Subscriptions for 2012
Ordinary membership: Single $30, Family $40
Pensioner or student: Single $25, Family $30
Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

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